

Palestine the Legend

Palestine will walk free as it did for decades on a road without an end.
 It will head towards tomorrow fully prepared and with its dream intact. Death will not intervene this time.
 It will find a shortcut beyond the Eiffel Tower, and there absolutely is somewhere beyond.
 It will not look back, taking the advice of 'the old man and the sea'.
 Palestine will be present and on time, not as a state or a homeland, but will appear to us as a legend of existence.
 There is nowhere other than Palestine, no other place on earth. People die every moment in it, for it and with it and yet remain enchanted by our love for it.
 People will sacrifice for you, Palestine, and your leaders will promptly pay the price needed to make you happy again, since you are the homeland.
 Did we say before you are not merely a homeland?
 We concede!
 You are a homeland and we know what a homeland truly means.

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4 PAGES

Are Palestinians shifting their strategic alliance from the United States to Europe ?



Mohammad Yunis

Some years ago, a politician advised President Mahmoud Abbas to transfer strategic alliances from the United States to the European Union.

The advice was not taken seriously. However, two major developments may lead to this change. The first is the new American President who recently assumed office and who is more biased to Israel. The second is the convening of the international peace conference in the French capital, Paris, with the participation of over 70 countries, including the most influential European countries in the international arena such as France and Germany, alongside a number of international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union, and the Brics.

The Palestinian ambassador to France, Dr. Suleiman al-Herfi, told al-Hal: "The Paris Conference proved that we can rely on Europe because European countries are more affected by the conditions in our region and are concerned about the collapse of the two-state solution. Hence, they will exert greater pressure in the face of Israeli measures to put an end to the

two-state solution."

He added: "The Paris Conference reinstated the Palestinian cause on the international agenda after it was buried under the rubble of exploding regional issues. We can build on this for future opposition to Israeli policies and American bias in the Trump era, especially regarding settlements and annexation."

Since his election as President in early 2005, Mahmoud Abbas has sustained a special relationship with the United States of America, the sole and exclusive sponsor of the peace process and the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority (over \$400 million annually)."

This relationship was enhanced during the era of former President Barak Obama, who according to President Abbas' close aides, made considerable efforts to reach a solution to the Palestinian cause and put pressure on Israel to halt settlements. He failed due to being restricted by the Republican majority in the Congress.

The Palestinian-American special relationship with the Obama administration culminated in American abstention from using the veto against the UN Security Council Resolution 1334 on settlements, and with Obama's signature on assistance of \$221 million to the PA in the last days of

his term in office.

The long honeymoon between Palestinians and the Obama administration, which lasted for eight years, came to a halt as soon as the new President Trump entered the White House.

Trump does not conceal his provocative bias towards the right-wing Israeli government, a matter of concern to Palestinians who fear that this government will implement its plans for the annexation of specific settlements to Israel during the Trump era. There are also fears about the establishment of the E1 settlement [between Maale Adumim and East Jerusalem] which forms the last settlement barrier separating the northern and central West Bank from the south, hampering the geographic link necessary for the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state in the future.

President Mahmoud Abbas received many suggestions about how to deal with the potential new American policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the possibility of the American embassy being moved to Jerusalem, and facilitating the annexation of settlement blocs etc... However, close aides to Abbas prefer to wait until American foreign policy under the new President has taken shape. In particular, there is the suggestion to

sever the relationship with the Trump administration and transfer Palestinian strategic alliances towards the European Union.

The Palestinian ambassador in Paris said: "When France has succeeded in bringing the world to an international conference to express concern over the collapse of the two-state solution, and when this conference has set up committees, including one headed by Germany to build Palestinian state institutions, a committee headed by the European Union for economic development, and a third committee headed by Sweden for civil society, this signifies actual European recognition of the State of Palestine."

He added: "The international conference will convene again and the three committees have already started their work. Therefore, we expect that this will result in political, economic and technical support for the Palestinian state and its institutions with collective European recognition of the Palestinian state."

The ambassador stressed: "If the objective of European recognition of the State of Palestine on the 1967 territories is achieved, this alone is enough to confront the Israeli right-wing government and its coalition with the Trump administration."

The Facebook page of the Israeli coordinator: Attempts to clean the image of the occupation

Manar Arouri

A research study conducted by Birzeit University entitled 'The impact of Arabic-speaking Israeli Facebook pages on the Palestinian public: The page of the Israeli coordinator as a case study' demonstrated several results, notably that the coordinator's page had received 76% positive comments and 24% negative comments.

The study showed that Israeli discourse has succeeded in penetrating the Palestinian public and Palestinian users constitute 76% of those interacting with the page of the coordinator of the so-called civil administration of the occupied territories. The page received the highest number of likes (69%) from Palestinians, with lower rates from people in other Arab countries.

The study demonstrated the Israeli coordinator was untruthful in claiming that the aim of the Facebook page was to focus on humanitarian aspects since political aspects were prominent: there were 207 posts on political matters versus 173 posts on humanitarian issues.

The study clarified that the coordinator posted 450 posts on marketing materials compared with 120 news items and 90 advertisements.

Mohammad Abu Rub, a professor at Birzeit University and the supervisor of the study, said that posts that received the highest number of hits were those related to sales of items or about new procedures for issuing permits. He emphasized that public interaction on the coordinator's page was real despite the existence of some fake accounts.

The aim of the coordinator's page

A researcher on Israeli affairs, Mohammad Abu Allan, stated that the coordinator's page on Facebook was not constructed without a purpose but formed part of a plan by the Israeli Ministry of Defense to communicate directly with Palestinians and resolve issues in isolation from PA institutions.

Abu Allan added that the aim of the page is to transform the face of the occupation by biased coverage of events and posting images that market the occupation and cover up their crimes of killing. He emphasized that the goal of the Israeli



Ali Obeidat



Khaldoun Barghouti



Mohammad Abu Allan



Mohammad Abu Rub

coordinator is to 'highlight the occupation as a positive thing'. Abu Allan explained that the interaction of the Palestinian public with the coordinator is not linked to people's likes but is exploitation of people's needs for work or medical permits. Some citizens who are subject to a security ban believe that direct interaction via this page may resolve their problem.

Khaldoun Barghouti, editor of al-Hayyat al-Jadida newspaper and a writer on Israeli affairs, said: "There are suspicions about moderation as comments critical of the coordinator on his page, such as logical debate about the occupation forces, are omitted, a negative impression of Palestinians is propagated through swearing, or portraying a positive impression about the relationship between Palestinians and the person who enforces the power of occupation over them."

Abu Allan said that the Israeli Foreign Ministry manages its website in five languages. There is great interest in social networking sites, especially among young people who are the prime users of social media.

Barghouti believes that the risk of direct interaction with the occupation administration is that it is made at the expense of communication with the Palestinian Authority and increases networking with the occupation authorities, which is in itself a dangerous step that ignores PA institutions.

Both Abu Allan and Barghouti stressed that this direct networking leads to the possibility of recruitment of young Palestinians by Israeli intelligence. This risk is not being

countered by awareness-raising by PA institutions.

Journalist Ali Obeidat said that it is extremely difficult to control such web pages in the chaotic melée of social networking sites. However, it is possible and necessary to raise awareness of the risks of such pages in polishing the image of the occupation to make it appear humanitarian and compassionate towards our people, while settlements are taking over Palestinian land night and day.

The role of government and local media

To tackle this phenomenon, Barghouti said: "The local media must raise the awareness of the Palestinian public about the risks of dealing with the Israeli coordinator and of turning to his Facebook page for queries or to seek information or services provided by the Israelis."

Abu Allan confirmed that the local media do not tackle the issue of social networking, and that young people must be aware, even without intervention by government media. He explained that it is the responsibility of the local media and media departments to raise public awareness of this issue.

Obeidat clarified: "The Palestinian government media is not performing its role in tackling such dangers due to the political divide, although it is its duty to inform the Palestinian public of the risks that result from following such pages on which the Israeli occupation attempts to promote itself."

**Manar Arouri is a student at the Media department of Birzeit University.*

Ghanem: 1948 Palestinians...unequal citizenship in Israel and exclusion from the national project

Anas Abu Areesh

The Director-General of the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR) and assistant professor for the Israeli Studies Program at Birzeit University, Hunaida Ghanem, believes that Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948 stand on the sidelines of a tangle of contradictory national and civil issues that make their role in the Palestinian national project complex and complicated.

According to Ghanem, Palestinians in the 1948 territories stand between two scenarios without belonging fully and completely to either of them and without being fully excluded from either of them. Thus, they position themselves on the brink of many contradictory and entangled circles. On the one hand, there are 1948 Palestinians who are included in the overall Palestinian project that was created outside the borders of the Palestine ravaged in 1948, but they remain outside the national liberation project and the national imagination formed mainly externally. They have gradually started to return to this national meme with the start of cultural and literary productions in the occupied homeland. This began with the publication of Ghassan Kanafani's book on poets of resistance in the occupied territories and the spread of the poetry of resistance initiated by a group of poets from 1948 Palestine who became the bearers of national identity.

Yet following the 1948 catastrophe, Palestinians in those areas positioned themselves within Israeli civil space as citizens of a state established on the rubble of their people's homeland and dreams, a state that perceives them as a national enemy and controls them as

if they represent an underlying danger.

This situation, as Ghanem explains, places the 1948 Palestinians in a colonial and settlement state that rejects them, with unequal citizenship based on exclusion; they are faced with the occupied homeland which they espouse and citizenship in a colonial state.

Exclusion

Ghanem believes that Palestinians in Israel face exclusion on two fronts: Firstly, from the Palestinian national project, whether that for the liberation of Palestine or the project to establish a state on less than 22% of the land of Palestine; Secondly, from Israel that attempts to exclude them as undesirable. Therefore, a 1948 Palestinian is the result of the dialectic between living inside the homeland and on the edge of politics, between the desire to adhere to the location which is the core of the conflict and Israeli attempts to exclude him from this space. Undoubtedly, this condition afflicting 1948 Palestinians is due to their being a minority that survived the ravages of the catastrophe and remained in their homeland, but here they were less than a community and more than a group, less than citizens but more than nationals.

Dismantling colonialism from the inside
Ghanem believes that Palestinians in Israel remained unseen since the Nakba and until the end of the military rule. In other words, they were literally severed from the Arab world and from the Jewish community alike. In addition to this disconnection, they have largely been missing in the national and civic sense because they were regarded by Arabs and Palestinians as agents of the Jewish state which, in its turn, regarded them as enemy citizens due to their common interests

with the Arabs outside the borders. This led to double marginalization from two sides.

The dual role of the Nakba

Hunaida Ghanem argues that although the Nakba that occurred to the Palestinians in 1948 was catastrophic by and large, it played a double role in constructing the modern Palestinian identity. The Nakba constitutes the moment of destruction of the Palestinian entity as a whole, dispersing Palestinians into parts in terms of geo-politics on the one hand, and binding them in the basic knot of the collective national identity on the other. Thus the Nakba exists in the national culture as the fundamental event that connects all Palestinians who were dispersed and fragmented by its effect. According to Ghanem, this dual meaning of Nakba allows us to address it, not only as a fragmentation and disruption of the whole self, but also as a unifying element for combining the parts. Thus Nakba in this sense turns from being a dead end to an epilogue that conveys new beginnings and a threshold for building a Palestinian national entity for the Palestinian people as a conscious whole with parallel political expression.

In this context, Nakba constitutes the temporal collective moment and node that links together the threads of fragmented groups in one narrative with common components. Thus, Palestinians may feel sympathetic towards it as an expression of their psychological entity. In this sense, the Nakba is a mechanism for the reproduction of the collective identity to which Palestinians cling. Hence we understand why Samieh al-Qasem, Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Ziad, Rashed Hussein and Hanna Abu Hanna are considered Palestinian poets at large, but



not poets of Arab citizens in Israel.

Nevertheless, the political fragmentation persisted without joint frameworks or links versus the collective identity and national narrative as described by Ghanem. Therefore, the national project developed in the Diaspora as liberation from Zionist colonization, restoration of rights, the liberation of Palestine, and later the project seeking the establishment of a state without the 1948 Palestinians on board as they were engaged in the Israeli system on the basis of their citizenship. They developed their own political projects, legal language and tools of resistance within the objective contexts and power relations with which they interact.

Ghanem believes that the best thing Palestinians can do now to transcend this fragmentation is to find national collective frameworks for political networking in parallel with political projects for different groups, with emphasis on investing in the collective national project that must engage the Palestinians in the 1948 territories.

Jerusalem Basketball Academy...protecting and channeling the energy of young people

■ Anwar Khatib

Khaled Assem Barakat, a young Jerusalem resident, established the Jerusalem Basketball Academy in 2015 as a means to engage young Jerusalemites in useful activities that steer them away from vice, delinquency, and addiction. Young people and children living in Jerusalem can relax in this inviting sporty atmosphere, away from pressures, oppression, siege and Israelization.

The Academy strives to be a place where children and young people from Jerusalem can express themselves through sport and expend their energy in a positive way. The Academy was established in partnership with several Jerusalem organizations such as the Palvision (Ruya), Collective and Individual Sports Union and with support from several people and parties in Jerusalem.

Barakat told al-Hal that the Academy was established to respond to the need for a positive outlet to release energy in an athletic framework different from other types of sports that target specific categories e.g. soccer, while basketball is a popular and widespread sport.

The Academy conducts training for 130 participants of both sexes and all age groups in the playground of Tur School in Jerusalem.

Barakat stated that after joining the Academy, the new member is integrated into a team appropriate to his sex and age. The Academy accepts children regardless of their economic status, giving space for young Jerusalemites to play sports without a financial burden to their family, given the difficult economic conditions of Jerusalemites in general.

Barakat explained that in view of the security situation and events in Jerusalem, the Academy is currently doubling its efforts to increase training and activities, and to steer young people away from the negative atmosphere loaded with bloody events, racism, and deliberate harassment by the

occupation forces. Negative and aggressive thoughts can be turned into positive energy by providing extracurricular activities that enhance individual life skills and athletic talents useful to the young people themselves and to the Jerusalem and Palestinian community alike.

Academy members have participated in many local sports competitions, including the Yusif Hamadneh championship where the Academy team came second, the Palestinian young league tournament organized by the Palestinian Basketball Federation, the Angelo championship organized by Burg LuqLuq Social Society, the tournament for young Palestinian women organized by the Palestinian Basketball Federation, and in many friendly games.

The Jerusalem Basketball Academy provides a welcoming atmosphere for its female members by providing a closed playground that ensures that membership is not limited to males only.

Academy member Samar Wazooz, aged 16, from the Old City of Jerusalem, said that girls joined the Academy because they felt comfortable there and have confidence in its administration and training. She added that the restrictions imposed on girls by the community, customs and traditions create the need for them to express themselves in a positive way and sport builds self-confidence and values, develops skills, and teaches discipline, ambition and how to deal with loss and success. In general, women are not engaged in basketball because there are few local competitions and the number of girls keen to participate in this sport is small.

Wazooz said: "My ambition is to participate in the national basketball team and tour the world, winning championships abroad. Jerusalemites have positive energies and skills that have been long suppressed by the Israeli occupation and its restrictions." She expressed her hope that official bodies will devote more attention to engaging girls in this type of sports.



Developing children's skills through participation in local basketball tournaments

The mother of member Mohammad Alian told al-Hal: "The Academy has made a significant contribution by providing a safe and relaxing place for parents and children, especially for families where both parents go to work and they need a location where children can spend time before returning home, and where they can develop their skills without frustration or boredom." She added that Jerusalem residents have few places where children can stay after school other than being alone at home or on the streets, where they face threats from the Israeli occupation forces, road accidents, or may adopt bad habits due to too much free time without supervision.

Electricity crisis in Gaza...ostensibly financial, but political at its core

■ Intisar Abu Jahl

For the past ten years, the Gaza Strip has suffered from electricity shortages due to crises that appear to be financial on the surface but are political in essence. Residents are bitterly resigned but when officials sense that the patience of residents is exhausted, they give them some anesthesia. This quickly wears off and the crisis builds again.

In this report, al-Hal attempts to identify the causes of the electricity crisis by interviewing those concerned.

The director of public relations at the Gaza Power Generating Company, Tareq Labad, confirmed that the reason for the electricity crisis is the shortage of power supplies from both Egypt and Israel, in addition to the lack of fuel needed to operate the plant.

Labad added: "The Company needs to supply 450MW at the height of summer and 550MW in the winter, although the supply capacity provided before the Qatari donation was only 160MW with a shortfall of over 70%."

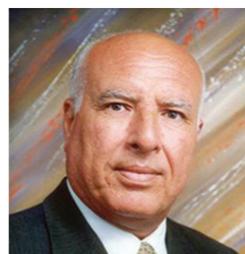
He explained that 40% of consumers do not pay regularly and as a result, they cannot buy larger supplies of fuel. In addition, high taxes are imposed on the fuel needed to operate the station.

He noted that the Company conducts ongoing campaigns to encourage consumers to pay for their consumption, but the prevailing economic conditions prevent many from responding. The director of public relations at the Energy and Natural Resources Authority in the Gaza Strip, Ahmad Abu Omrein, said: "The crisis aggravates year after year due to the accumulative deficit in power generation versus increases in population and urbanization."

He added: "There are several projects that contribute to lessening the electricity crisis: the Israeli 161 power line project [to be established from Israel to Gaza], the project to switch to natural gas instead of manufactured diesel, in addition to the eight countries' interconnection project with Egypt."

He also clarified that the taxes imposed on fuel are tripling its price, in particular the 'blue' tax of 200% and other taxes that raise prices by 128%. He indicated that ongoing discussions about exemption from taxes are related only to the 'blue' tax, which is a high value added tax on industrial fuel and fuel used to generate power.

"We are caught in a vicious circle with very high taxes that prevent us from buying more than limited quantities" said



Faiz Abu Shammalah



Hani Thawabteh



Tareq Labad



Ahmad Abu Omrein



Zafer Melhem

Abu Omrein.

On the right of the Palestinian Authority to impose the same taxes on fuel as those imposed on other goods, Abu Omrein said: "No government in the world taxes itself. We are the ones who buy the fuel, not the Palestine Electric Company, according to the 2003 agreement. Besides, provision of electricity is a humanitarian service."

Zafer Melhem, acting CEO of the Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA) in Ramallah, stated: "The electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip is based on a 10% increase in annual consumption without any increase in supply and resources."

Melhem stressed that the provision of other resources is linked to the financial status of the Company as a profit organization rather than a service one. He described the Palestine Electric Company as a 'gold mine', indicating that the PA does not want to make profit but also does not want to incur losses.

He continued: "We pay on behalf of the Company NIS40 to NIS50 million to the Israelis and NIS8 to NIS10 million to the Egyptians, in addition to the cost of maintenance of supply lines, technical and technological issues and in addition to a waiver of a large proportion of the taxes imposed on fuel."

Melhem noted that problems center on the proportion of levy compared to consumption, which is zero in the Gaza Strip. He explained that the solution lies in restructuring both the Electricity Company and PENRA in the Gaza Strip to enable a unity government and other sectors to take over, enforce the law, and resolve the crisis once and for all. "There is no sincere intention to give the government control," said Melhem.

He also added that those ruling the Gaza Strip want to obtain electricity for free, which could cost the government

\$2 billion annually.

Melhem argued that PENRA has been waiving about 60-80% of the 'blue' tax imposed on fuel. He believes that the imposition of taxes on goods is common to all governments in the world. In any case, the tax is not imposed on PENRA as a government agency and an intermediary for buying fuel. On the 14th of January, Palestinian factions proposed an initiative comprising eight points, most importantly the formulation of a national committee to seek solutions to the electricity crisis; restructuring the board of directors of the Electricity Company to take into consideration professional expertise and political pluralism; increasing the proportion of the levy; completely waiving the 'blue' tax; and implementing developmental projects to end the crisis.

A leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Hani Thawabteh, said: "The initiative that we proposed is workable if there is a real will on both sides."

Melhem stressed the need for an appropriate legal environment to implement the initiative. Political analyst Fayez Abu Shamaleh confirmed that there are two tracks to resolve the electricity crisis: First, exempting fuel from tax because the Company is barely making any profit, and any profit it does make is wiped out while consumers escape payment, as confirmed by the committee formulated by the political groups to review the Company's accounts. The weak levy is due to the economic conditions in the Gaza Strip. Secondly, the Company must find a way to prosecute those who do not pay for their consumption and should rapidly install pre-paid meters.

He concluded: "The solution lies in the political factions undertaking their responsibility to the public by setting up a supreme committee to supervise the work of the Electric Company."

One hundred poems and a first edition of 3000 copies

Mahmoud Darwish's poems in Chinese

Ahmad Shalash

In the Chinese capital Beijing, a book was recently published under the title *A Lover from Palestine: An Anthology of Mahmoud Darwish Poetry* by Hunan Literature & Art Publishing House, a subsidiary of Zhongnan Publishing Media Corporation.

The book comprises one hundred poems by Darwish and is the first publication of translated poems from Arabic into Chinese.

The poems were translated by Dr. Xue Qing-Guo (known as Bassam), professor of Arabic language at Beijing Foreign Studies University, and his colleague Tang Jon who earned a PhD for her thesis on the poet Mahmoud Darwish.

The birth of the idea

In an interview with al-Hal newspaper, Dr. Bassam said that Darwish is a starlit name in the skies of international literature. On the day Darwish died, the path opened for publication of this book.

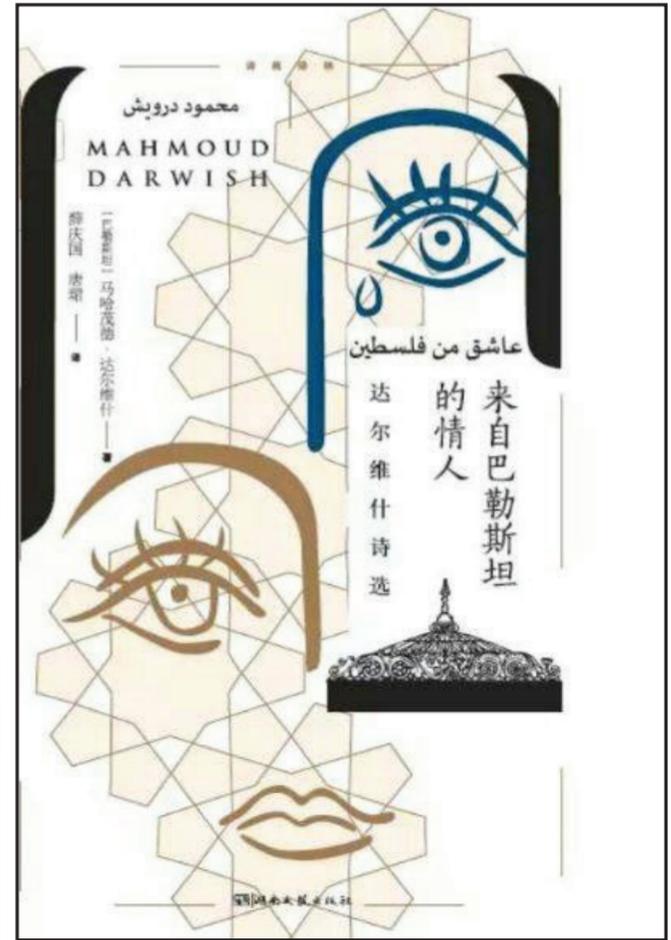
He added: "On the 8th of July 2008, Beijing was celebrating the launch of the Olympics, while the whole world was paying farewell the following day to one of the most prominent international poets. On that day, we in China could not commemorate Darwish in an event, which left me disgruntled and I started thinking about translating his works. That was realized this year (2016)."

Dr. Bassam had translated several poems by Arab poets, including by the Syrian poet Adonis. He said: "Some Arab friends who learned about my translation of Arabic poetry asked when I would translate Darwish's poetry. This encouraged me to take action and translate several poems until the idea of this book took shape." Dr. Bassam started translating selected poems by Mahmoud Darwish from 2009 until 2015 with the aim of publishing poems in specialized journals or for academic purposes, such as those translated by his colleague, Tang Jon, during her PhD studies.

In 2016, the idea of publishing a book featuring selections of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry began with Dr. Bassam translating some poems for this purpose and redrafting the poems translated by his colleague closer to poetic language.

The selection of poems

Critics divide Darwish's poetry into stages linked to the poet's relationship with his homeland and cause, the Diaspora, exile and leaving his home, all in light of his relationship with the



Dr. Bassam, the translator and the cover of the first edition of the book

self. The book attempted to cover these stages.

Dr. Bassam said: "The book takes into consideration that the reader is new to Darwish's poetry, hence the selected poems were not long and covered various stages of his creativity.

He explained: "The poems were selected from all collections and covering various stages and topics to make the Chinese reader become familiar as much as possible with Darwish's poetry. Focus was put on short poems and only the beginnings and ends of long poems were translated, such as *The Mural*."

Dr. Bassam added that the selection of poems attempted to pass a message to the Chinese reader about the characteristics of Darwish and his views on many issues, in addition to introducing the causes about which Darwish wrote his poetry, namely the Palestinian cause, exile, the land and homeland.

Translation and meaning

The two translators exerted considerable efforts in translating Darwish's poems due to the special nature of his poetry.

Dr. Bassam clarified that Darwish's poetry is characterized by lyrics and musicality. Thus, the translation process

was able to draw an image but could not reflect the music to the reader. "It is difficult to translate music as it is a feeling that cannot be interpreted and cannot be felt without undergoing and living the condition that the poet is talking of in the original text."

Dr. Bassam added that he had read many poems by Darwish intended for inclusion in the book but he opted to exclude them after translation because they "had lost their spirit and music."

He pointed to another difficulty in Darwish's poetry, which is that the poems are associated with his life and relationship with exile and the homeland. This makes it difficult for any Chinese reader who has never undergone similar conditions to empathise with the poetic image drawn by Darwish.

Reaction of critics

The reaction of critics was positive towards the book, 3,000 copies of which were released in its first edition.

On the day the book was published, a discussion was held attended by a large number of poets and writers, including *Bei Dao, the great Chinese poet, and Gedi Magia, the vice-president of the Chinese Writers' Association.*

Magia said in a press release: "Darwish must be seeing us and watching what we are doing although he departed to another world. He must feel happy and proud that more of his magnificent poems have entered into the prestigious Chinese language and are once again put in the hands of their lovers on this vast area of the earth."

Magia added: "There is no doubt that Darwish's poetry as a classic work of literature in Arabic and the humanitarian spirit that it embraces will form a significant part of the poetic literary treasure of the Chinese language."

Arabic language in China

About 200 students are studying Arabic language at Beijing Foreign Studies University, while the estimated number of Chinese scholars learning Arabic has reached tens of thousands; fifty Chinese universities teach Arabic.

Dr. Bassam commented: "The Beijing Foreign Studies University has a four-year program for teaching Arabic; students start with the alphabet and study some Arabic dialects in their last year. They take courses in Arabic literature and history, in Arab-Chinese relations and exchange, and learn about Islam and other Arab-related issues.